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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - MAY 18

REF: KINSHASA 463

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.
Anti-LRA Operations

¶2. (SBU) MONUC reported a FARDC-LRA clash in Galima, south of Duru, resulting in 3 LRA killed. MONUC intends to establish bases in Duru and Faradje to increase its presence in Haut-Uele, currently at 500 troops (3% of MONUC's forces in the DRC). The FARDC has 4,697 troops in Haut Uele, but intends to increase this number to 8,000. Most of the Congolese troops are well-trained Republican Guard who appear to enjoy the support of the local population. MONUC is considering options to feed FARDC troops who are involved in operations. MONUC sources confirmed that the UPDF is doing most of the "heavy lifting" against the LRA, with 6-7 companies of infantry and special forces still in the region.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC reported that Joseph Kony could be near Bitima, on the South Sudan border. Local FARDC commanders maintain that the LRA is much less of a military threat now, with most rebels focused on looting and foraging for food.

Security Situation in the Kivus -----

¶4. (SBU) MONUC is attempting to verify reports that the FARDC may have killed more than 90 people on May 3 near Nyabitekwe, just north of the North Kivu-South Kivu border. Most of the victims were reportedly FDLR dependents.

¶5. (U) A multi-section MONUC team, consisting of its Human Rights, Civil Affairs, and Child Protection sections, has returned from a field investigation of a May 9-10 FDLR attack at Busurungi. The team described a scene of "total desolation," with more than 60 dead and more than 50 injured evacuated to local hospitals.

¶6. (U) The Busurungi attack has caused IDP movements in the direction of Hombo and Bunyakiri. Local leaders have signaled a deteriorating humanitarian situation in the area. Rumors continue to circulate concerning an eventual FDLR attack on Hombo.

¶7. (SBU) The number of houses burned by the FDLR in Butatongola (reftel), on the shores of Lake Edward, has been revised upward to ¶130. (Comment: FDLR retaliation in North Kivu has generally been in the form of house burnings, perhaps because in many areas the FDLR maintains local and ethnic connections. End Comment.)

¶8. (SBU) Six FDLR cadre attacked a police station in Kinyandoni in North Kivu, presumably to try to free two locals arrested by the Congolese police. Two police officers were killed in the attack. MONUC responded to the incident and the FDLR cadre fled.

¶9. (U) Radio Okapi reported that the FDLR is using several thousand residents of Luso and Kalehe, in Walikale Territory, as human shields against FARDC operations. The residents are reportedly being held as virtual slaves. Last week, the FARDC killed FDLR combatants during an attack in the area.

Bemba and the ICC

¶10. (U) In an interview with Radio Okapi, the Spokesman for the Kinshasa office of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Paul Madidi, said that the ICC would decide by the end of June whether or not the charges against former DRC Vice-President Jean Pierre Bemba were valid. If the court rules that they are, then his trial can commence. If the ICC rules that the charges are not valid, Bemba could be ordered free. However, Madidi noted that, at the moment, the prosecution would certainly appeal the ruling.

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